

The Prevalence of Drug and Substance Abuse among School Going Teenagers in the Shiselweni Region of Swaziland

Dlamini Patience Gugu¹ and Makondo Davison²

¹Nzongomane Primary School,
P. O. Box 1486 Nhlangano, Swaziland

²Educational Foundations and Management, University of Swaziland,
Private Bag 4 Kwaluseni, Swaziland

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ABSTRACT: The study sought to explore the prevalence and societal influence on drug and substance abuse among secondary school going teenagers in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland. Exploratory sequential mixed method research design was employed. Focus group discussions with 35 learners who were drug and substance abusers were selected using snowball sampling. In-depth interviews with four principals of the selected schools were done to generate qualitative data and these were selected using the criterion purposive sampling method. The generated qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis and were used to form items of a questionnaire given to 200 randomly selected students for quantitative data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, frequencies, mean and standard deviation. The study revealed that drug and substance abuse was prevalent among teenage learners and the society was encouraging drugs and substances abuse. A programme to deal with abuse problems was recommended.

KEYWORDS: drug, drug abuse, society, substance, substance abuse.

1 INTRODUCTION

Researchers and other related stakeholders observe that the deliberate intake and consumption of drugs and other impairing substances are on the increase the world over. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2010) estimated that 3.4% to 6.6% of the world's population or people aged from 15 to 64 years old had used illegal drugs. It is also estimated that there were between ninety-nine to two hundred and fifty three thousand deaths globally that resulted from the use of illegal drugs (UNODC, 2010).

Owo (2012) states that all over the world the problem of alcohol and other drug abuse amongst school going teenagers is recognised as one of the greatest challenges of our time. Maithya, Muola and Mwinzi (2013) further state that over the past decades the use of illicit drugs has spread at an unprecedented rate and has reached every part of the world. Thus, this study sought to find out the prevalence of drug and drug abuse in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland and also to explore the role played by society in influencing the teenage learners to partake in drug and substance abuse.

Pelzer (2009) who analysed data from six African countries: Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe, as part of the Global School Based Health Survey reported that 6.6% of the students use alcohol at harmful or potentially harmful levels (2 times or more per day for at least 20 days in 30 days) and 10.5% use illicit drug (3 or more times ever). Students were drawn from grades 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 and sample size was 20,765 students. In 2001 the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) revealed that 70% of the homesteads in the Hhohho region of Swaziland grew their own marijuana. As a result damages in the form of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health have been experienced by and observed in individuals, families and communities in Swaziland. In 2006 the National Council of Smoking, Alcohol and Drug Dependence Swaziland (COSAD), assisted by the Medical Research Council (MRC) in South Africa, reported that the majority

of individuals who abused drugs in Swaziland began between the ages of 10 – 19 years; and the prevalence of substance abuse was higher among males as compared to females.

According to the Swaziland National Youth Policy (SNYP) (2009), an assessment report on substance abuse done by the Ministry of Health Swaziland-MOHSW in 2002 showed that 34% of the sample population of young people was found to be abusing different substances. Of the total percentage of the abusers, 60% of them abused alcohol, 31.1% abuse tobacco while 8.9% abused other drugs such as mandrax, cocaine and heroin and inhalants such as glue and benzene. Marijuana abuse was highest at 93.8%. In addition to that, the report revealed that the majority of drug abusers started at the age of 10 years.

In 2015, again, the Royal Swaziland Police of the Anti-drug Unit further reported alarming statistical levels on drug abuse arrests in Swaziland. Table 1 shows figures of people (n=5951) who were arrested for narcotics abuse and trafficking in each of the four regions of Swaziland, from year 2011 to year 2014. Among these people there were juveniles (n=54) aged 12- 18 years. The figures shown on the Table 1 clearly indicates the magnitude of the prevalence of drug and substance abuse in Swaziland. Hence, Ndlangamandla (2014, September 15) concluded that drug and substance abuse is a monster which is threatening the success and prosperity of the young people in Swaziland. Thus, the researchers were interested in finding out if this was also common in the Shiselweni region of Swazind.

Table 1. Statistics of arrests on narcotics use in Swaziland from 2011 - 2014

Year		Hhohho	Manzini	Shiselweni	Lubombo	Totals
2011	Arrests	590	334	205	138	1267
	Males	454	282	177	109	1022
	Females	136	52	28	29	245
	Juveniles	10	5	9	2	26
2012	Arrests	556	302	212	117	1187
	Males	398	235	176	89	898
	Females	158	67	36	28	299
	Juveniles	3	3	1	1	8
2013	Arrests	762	478	204	103	1547
	Males	487	322	168	82	1059
	Females	275	156	36	21	488
	Juveniles	3	3	4	0	10
2014	Arrests	309	569	918	154	1950
	Males	267	449	691	112	1519
	Females	42	120	227	42	431
	Juveniles	3	0	4	0	10

Source: Royal Swaziland Police Anti-drug Unit (2015)

On another note, Rew (2005) laments that due to the toxicity and addictiveness of drugs; consumption of drug and other intoxicating substances implies slow suicide. According to Rew (2005) find out that drug and substance abuse poison and degenerate the vital body organs causing diseases like liver cirrhosis, kidney failure and heart attack. Addiction starts when the abusers continue to take drugs in order to carry out their daily duties. This makes the problem of drug and substance abuse in the society complex and requires a lot of attention. Abdu-Raheem (2013) declares that drug and substance abuse is both a national and international sensitive challenge that needs urgent attention due to the alarming rate of involvement of the youth.

The Swaziland government has made efforts to control drug and alcohol abuse through illegalizing the selling of alcohol to people under the age of 18 years. However, this has had little impact since the perpetrators do so in search of money. The rate at which drug and substance abuse is spreading among young people; seem to be damaging the country's culture, social and moral fibre calls; hence the need for a well informed action. This study, therefore, sought to explore the prevalence of drug and substance abuse, focusing only on marijuana and alcohol, among secondary school going teenagers in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to:

- 2.1.** explore the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among secondary school going teenagers in the Shiselweni of Swaziland; and
- 2.2.** establish how society influences drug and substance abuse among secondary school teenagers in Swaziland.

3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

According to the UNODC (2010), marijuana remains the most widely used illicit substance globally. The UNODC attributed the prevalent use of marijuana to the fact that marijuana can be easily cultivated both indoors and outdoors. Therefore; its relatively simple production has led to its being produced and traded almost everywhere in the world. Reesor, John, Ward, & Wang'Ombe (2009) reported that in rural areas, both marijuana and locally brewed alcohol are virtually free for most young people as they are grown or brewed in the homesteads. As such, poverty has little influence in keeping young people away from drugs in these areas. In urban areas, drugs or alcohol are sometimes used as a way for boys to gain peer recognition by demonstrating their access to disposable income for these items. Religious clerics, girls and boys report that parents often drink heavily and/or use drugs in the presence of their children. This often influences children to also like to drink or try drugs.

Craig (2004) as well as Joseph and Ngesu (2012) concur that people engage in illicit drugs and substances because of their availability and such availability is facilitated by those who benefit financially from the act of drug selling. Also, according to Masilo (2012), the environment in which learners go to in school can contribute to their engagement in drug use, that is, if there are many taverns or, for that matter, shebeens within reach of the school premises; learners are prone to have appetite drugs and alcohol.

Harnandez and Araiza(2014) found out that in U.S. A, 10.1% of youth aged 12 to 17 were using illegal drugs; and the most frequently used drug being marijuana. The study findings confirmed findings of a study by Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman & Schulenberg (2007) which also found that almost half of high school seniors in U.S.A. reported to be using illicit drugs at least once during their lifetime. Therefore, easy availability and low prices of drugs and substances have contributed to the drug and substance abuse among young people.

A study by Siphepho, Dlamini and Nxumalo (2013), on management of violence in high schools by teachers, parents and students in the Manzini region of Swaziland, revealed that alcohol abuse among the students is very common during the marula season in which the fruits are brewed and enjoyed by many including children. According to the study, there are even days set aside by government authorities during which women regiments are expected to brew the marula fruit and then bring the alcohol for national celebration ceremonies. Also, according to Siphepho, Dlamini & Nxumalo (2013) it is believed that alcohol brewed from tmarulafruit is healthy because it cleans the body systems. Hence, many Swazis are motivated to drink it, including the children. Because of this belief, the effect of the abuse of this alcohol among Swazis; is alarming.

On another note, Mhlongo (2005) also argues that accessibility of drugs is inevitable in Swaziland. This is because Swaziland is a landlocked country, and shares borders with the Republic of South Africa in the west, south, and north and Mozambique in the east and this makes drug trafficking into Swaziland very easy as the borders are easily permeable. Therefore, the drug problem is expected to escalate unless immediate steps are taken to prevent this from happening. Ondieki and Ondieki (2012), therefore, state that if drugs are ubiquitous students can access them.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is informed by the Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura of 1977. The theory posits that an individual learn most of his behaviour from the environment he lives in, by observing others in the same environment especially the significant other and role models. Bandura experimented with a Bobo doll to show that behaviour imitated through observations of influential persons. In this experiment children observed an adult woman violently beating up the Bobo doll. When the children were then let out to play in another room that had a new Bobo doll; a number of the children imitated the aggressive actions of the adult woman on the doll that they had previously observed during the experiment (Boeree, 2006). According to the social cognitive theory, children learn by observing and imitating models in their environment.

The main focus of this study is to explore the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among secondary school going teenager. The study also looked at how society influenced drug and substance abuse among secondary school going

teenagers. So, the Social Cognitive theory is relevant to this study because of the assumption that the acquisition of behaviours and values are greatly influenced by the matrix of social relationships in which the individuals are embedded. That is, the Social Cognitive theory assumes that individuals' behaviours and values are greatly influenced by their social background. Drug and substance abuse, therefore, is one of the much behaviour that results from an interaction between individual characteristics and the competing influences of multiple social groups.

5 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed method approach which followed an exploratory sequential research design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used, sequentially. The aim of this study was to explore the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among secondary school going teenagers in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland. Therefore, the exploratory sequential mixed method research design allowed the researcher to first conduct focus group discussions with the secondary school teenagers who were drug and substance abusers; and in-depth interviews with the principals of the same schools to explore their general attitudes, views, opinions, feelings and understanding towards the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among school going teenagers through the qualitative approach. Then through the quantitative approach, questionnaires were used in collecting quantitative data to confirm the qualitative findings. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) affirm that the exploratory sequential research design allows the use of both the qualitative approach which allows an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and the quantitative approach which enables the researcher to assess and confirm the qualitative data.

The snowball sampling technique was used to select 35 secondary school going teenagers from the selected schools in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland who were drug and substance abusers to participate in the qualitative phase. Through an informed discussion with a small group of students, the researchers got two names of teenage students who were drug and substance abusers. The two participants were approached by the researchers and they revealed names of their colleagues who were also drug and substance abusers. This process went on in all the 4 schools and the researchers were able to get a sample of 35 participants. According to Mcmillan and Schumacher (2010), in snowball sampling the researcher identifies and requests volunteers from a group of people who meet the specific requirements to participate in the study. These individuals then spread the information and identify other members from the same population for inclusion in the sample. The members may in turn identify a further set of individuals so that the sample grows in size like a rolling snowball.

Through simple random sampling (n=200) teenage students were selected out of (n=1,998) secondary school teenage students from the population of the four schools in the study. This was 10% of the total population of the study. Mushoriwa (2009) asserts that 10% to 20% of the sample is an adequate representative of the population. The simple random sampling procedure was a relevant sampling technique for the quantitative phase since the researcher wanted to confirm and generalise the qualitative findings to the population. Creswell (2012) asserts that the simple random sampling is important for the researcher to infer generalisations about the population at large. In conducting the simple random sampling, the researcher followed the steps outlined by Kumar (2010). The researcher first identified by number all the teenagers in the population; wrote the numbers on slips of paper and deposited them in a large bowl or container; then after mixing thoroughly, the researcher had one student blindfolded to select one number at a time until the desired sample size of teenage participants was obtained. That was the 200 teenagers from whole the population.

Bias in data collection instruments was prevented by avoiding ambiguous and vague words which could lead respondents to understand the question and answer a question differently than was intended. To ensure the validity of the instruments, the research instruments were reviewed by experts in the field of research. Instrument reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach Alpha; and the reliability coefficient was 68.3%. Permission to conduct the study in schools was granted by the Director of Education from the Ministry of Education and Training. Informed consent was sought from school principals and learners. Participants were informed that confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured using pseudonyms.

Qualitative data were collected and analysed first. For qualitative data, four focus group discussions with a total of 35 secondary school going teenagers who were drug and substance, alcohol and marijuana in particular, abusers selected. The snowball sampling technique was adopted to select participants from four schools. In-depth interviews with the four principals of the selected schools were conducted. These were selected using criterion purposive sampling. Each focus group discussion took about 35 to 40 minutes while each interview session took about 20 to 25 minutes. Then from the qualitative data a questionnaire used to gather quantitative data was generated. For the quantitative data, respondents were asked to respond to the questionnaire using a given six – point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

Qualitative data was transcribed and categorised into themes and then interpreted; at times verbatim. Quantitative data was analysed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20 and then presented using tables.

The descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean and standard deviation were used to interpret the quantitative data. In this study means that were 3.5 and above indicated prevalence of drug and substance abuse among school going teenagers, and indicated positive societal influences on drug and substance abuse among school going teenagers. Means below 3.5 indicated less prevalence of drug and substance abuse and less positive societal influences. In data collection and analysis, pseudonyms were used to refer to participants or respondents to ensure that confidentiality and privacy is observed.

6 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

THE PREVALENCE ON DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL GOING TEENAGERS

The school going teenagers were asked to describe the prevalence of drug and substance abuse in their respective schools. The participants' experiences are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Prevalence of marijuana and alcohol abuse among secondary school going teenagers

Statements	Mean	SD
Marijuana		
Most of the teenagers who smoke marijuana are boys	3.91	1.80
Teenagers abuse marijuana the most during sports activities in the school	3.70	1.79
As teenagers we enjoy eating marijuana with snacks	3.58	1.96
Most of the teenagers who smoke marijuana are girls	2.12	1.38
Alcohol		
Teenagers abuse alcohol the most during sports activities in the school	4.55	1.70
Most of the teenagers who abuse alcohol are boys	4.29	1.67
Teenagers prefer drinking beer more than umcombotsi	3.99	1.38
Teenagers prefer drinking beer more than marula	3.68	1.82
Teenagers prefer drinking marula more than beer	3.55	1.87
Most of the teenagers who abuse alcohol in the school are girls	2.45	1.51

The findings on Table 2 showed that drug and substance abuse in the schools studied, were very prevalent in such a way that the teenage students carried their alcohol to class in water-bottles (M = 4.07, SD 1.86) and they also used toilets as hiding places to consume alcohol and smoke marijuana (marijuana: M = 4.17, SD 1.80; alcohol: M = 3.80, SD 1.89). The teenage students drank alcohol right in class during teaching and learning. Teachers would think that the teenage students were drinking water to quench thirst without observing that they were in instead drinking alcohol. Also, according to the findings of the study, students did not only smoke marijuana but they also enjoyed eating it with snacks and the *mean* and *standard deviation* for those who used that format stood at (M=3.58, SD 1.96) respectively as compared to those who smoked it (M=3.02, SD 1.82). The teenage students explained that they crushed the marijuana, sprinkled it on snacks such as popcorns and nick-nets and ate it. When the researcher probed the participants why they enjoyed eating the marijuana more than smoking it; one of the teenage students 10 said, *"Smoking marijuana makes the effect short-lived in our body systems compared to when we will have eaten it. In addition to that, smoking will signal some authorities; whereas, eating is just quiet and safe for us."* Most of the participants concurred that smoking the marijuana would make them *high* very fast but it is short-lived whereas eating it with the snacks; takes it into the body system and the effect lasts longer. In addition to that, smoking will signal some authorities; whereas, eating is just quiet.

Also, according to the findings of the study, most of the secondary school going teenagers who were immersed in drug and substance abuse in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland were teenage boys (marijuana: M=3.91, SD 1.38; alcohol: M=4.29, SD 1.67) as compared to teenage girls (marijuana: M=2.12, SD 1.38; alcohol: M=2.45, SD 1.51). Teenage student 1 confirmed, *"We boys smoke a lot. Also, I would say in the 90% of the teenagers who abused alcohol 30% of them who are abusing alcohol are girls and about 60% are the boys."* The findings further showed that types of alcohol commonly abused by the teenagers were lager (M=3.68, SD 1.38) and *marula*, a Swazi traditionally brewed alcohol, (M=3.56, SD 1.70). In addition; the findings of the study showed that drug and substance abuse among the school going teenagers was very prevalent during sports activities (marijuana: M=3.70, SD1.79; alcohol: M=4.55, SD 1.70).

The principals affirmed that marijuana and alcohol abuse was very prevalent in their schools. St Albert Secondary School principal who had been the principal of the school for eight years said, *"People around this school cultivate marijuana. Since I*

arrived at this school I have noticed that education is not a priority among the male students and I blame that on the cultivation of marijuana." Also, St Daniels Secondary School principal said,

"Marijuana abuse is very prevalent among the teenage students in the school especially among the students in the hostels. Smoking and consumption of marijuana among the teenage students in the school both from the hostel and day scholars was estimated to be 5%. However, only the male teenage students had cases of marijuana abuse."

The findings of the study on the frequency of marijuana and alcohol abuse among school going teenagers are shown in Table 3. The findings on the table showed that teenage students smoked marijuana and drank alcohol once or twice a week (marijuana: 69.3%; and alcohol: 80.7%).

Table 3. Frequency level of marijuana and alcohol abuse among secondary going school teenagers

	Marijuana		Alcohol	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1-2 days	106	69.3	130	80.7
3-4 days	29	19.0	13	8.1
More than 4 days	18	11.8	18	11.2

The findings of the study about the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among the school going teenagers were congruent to the findings of a study conducted by Siphepho, Dlamini and Nxumalo (2013) in Swaziland which revealed that drug and alcohol abuse among students was very prevalent among students and that is evident during the marula season and during sports days where the students have a lot of chance to indulge in drug and alcohol abuse due to the large amount of time outside class and without close monitoring by their teachers. The findings are also in agreement with the findings of studies conducted by the National Council of Smoking Alcohol and Drug Dependence Swaziland (COSAD) (2006) and the Medical Research Council (MRC) in South Africa which observed that the prevalence of substance abuse was higher among males as compared to females.

SOCIETAL INFLUENCES ON DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL GOING TEENAGERS

The teenage students were asked how they thought society influenced the drug and substance abuse among secondary school going teenagers. Table 4 display participants' responses or experiences.

The findings of the study on Table 4 revealed that the community members did not only influence the drug and substance abuse among the teenage students through their behaviour but also by making marijuana farming look lucrative, hence important in one's life ($M=3.10$, $SD 1.85$); and selling alcohol to the teenage students ($M=3.57$, $SD 1.81$). Participants from St Albert and St Daniels Secondary Schools said that marijuana was grown in their communities.

Table 4. Societal influence on marijuana and alcohol abuse among secondary school going teenagers

Statements	Mean	SD
Most teenagers use the school toilets as hiding places for smoking marijuana	4.17	1.80
Peer pressure cause teenagers to abuse marijuana	3.49	1.79
Abuse of marijuana by educators is a contributory factor to teenagers' abuse of marijuana	3.16	1.89
70-90% of the people in my community cultivate marijuana	3.10	1.85
In my community marijuana farming is considered a very lucrative and important business	3.10	1.85
Teenagers carry alcohol in water bottles to class	4.07	1.86
Having shebeens/clubs/bars near the school	3.87	1.80
Most teenage students hide and drink their beer behind toilets in the school	3.80	1.89
During marula season adults sell marula alcohol even to students	3.57	1.81

The participants said that they grew up as young children knowing that farming marijuana was lucrative and normal. The participants revealed that from a very young age they have heard their fathers and brothers accusing some community

members especially males who did not engage themselves in cultivating marijuana as sell-outs and spies for the police. For instance, Teenage student 1 said,

Veleumaungalimiinsangukulenzawoyakitsisiyakulwisangobasititjelakwekutsiutawuphilangani, futsiumuntfulongayilimiinsanguufunakubayimpimpiyemaphoyisa. Umsebentikute la! Insanguinemali! Ngilaphaesikolweni-njeinyufomungiyatitsengela. Ngishoekhayabayakusupporternawucalakuyilima. Babe uveleatsi, Sewucalekubayindvodza-kenyalomfanawami.

Allowing shebeens/clubs/bars near the schools influenced drug and substance abuse among school going teenagers, particularly alcohol (M=3.87, SD 1.80). St Cadre Secondary School principal explained, *“The Cases of alcohol abuse are very common during marula season and this is because there are many marula trees in the area. Therefore, during the marula season, the marula alcohol is ubiquitous and accessible.”* The participants said that during the marula season they had plenty of marula alcohol because there were many naturally growing marula trees in their area. The participants said that both traditionally brewed alcohol and lager were sold in nearby homesteads and they have access to them.

Some of the participants explained that they bought themselves school uniform and even paid for their school fees through marijuana farming which gave them a lot of money. The participants also boasted that through marijuana farming they bought cattle. For instance, one participant said, *“I bought five cattle with the money I got from selling marijuana.”* while another participant said, *“I also bought two cattle.”* Cattle are a symbol of wealth among the Swazi people. The participants revealed that they could even buy cars but because they were still at school they did not buy them. They felt that there was no reason for a car when they were still at school. In addition, they said buying a car would attract the attention of the police in that the police would inquire how they bought cars when they were still at school.

The marijuana trade gave them so much money in such way that they felt that there was no need to continue schooling. Also, accessibility to marijuana and alcohol has significantly contributed to the drug and substance abuse among teenage students; and such findings concur with the finding of studies by Johnston et al. (2007) and Araiza and Harnandez (2014) which also found that availability and low prices of drugs and substances have contributed to the drug and substance abuse among young people in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland.

The study further revealed that other participants drank alcohol and smoked marijuana to ease stress caused by not getting what they were asking for from their parents. For instance, Teenage participant 10 said,

Like myself when I ask for something I need at school at home, my stepmother does not tell my father who works in Johannesburg mines. So I get stressed. Then “emajita” help me to relax. We drink and smoke and I then feel like all my problems are solved.

The participants also revealed that some of their parents were always engaged in their work and they had no time for them. In addition to some participants, reported that some of their parents/guardians were heavy drinkers and smokers and had little time for family issues. Therefore, the participants said that to close that gap, they sought attention elsewhere; which is their friends, drugs and alcohol. Other participants blamed their indulgence to alcohol abuse on parental separation and/divorce. Teenage Participant 5 said, *“I keep asking myself the question why my parents separated; and in trying not to think about my parents’ separation I take alcohol.”*

Therefore, from the results of the study, it can be concluded that some of the participants drank and smoked with friends to manage stress related problems caused by not getting what they were asking for from their parents. In addition to that, the results of the study showed that lack of parental care and love was a major factor contributing to the teenage students’ indulgence to drug and substance abuse.

Some participants lamented that the school environment had in one way or the other drove them to abuse the drugs and substances. They gave an example of their teachers whom they said were giving them stress. They said that their teachers called them by names such as ‘aphids’, ‘dullest student’, ‘umthoyi’. One participant said, *“So to repress that, we smoke marijuana.”* However, St Daniels Secondary School principal complained, *“Some drug dealers also send their kids to sell the marijuana in the school. One boy was caught selling marijuana to other students in the hostel.”* Therefore, learners are sometimes used as drivers of marijuana. This gives them access into drug and substance abuse and orients them into this seemingly lucrative but illegal business.

The participants also reported that the school has contributed to their drinking of alcohol in one way or another. They pointed out that teachers did not condemn or punish their drinking; but; they comically make fun about them when they realised that they were drunk. The participants further complained that some of their teachers, whom they looked revered a lot, were heavy drinkers themselves. One participant said, *“There is too much freedom in this school. So, many of my friends drink alcohol and namike angifuni kudisappointer bangانبami.”* The participants said that he started drinking because he

did not want to disappoint his friends who drank alcohol in the school. Some participants added that their school was too big such that it is too easy to hide in the crowd. They said that they had places inside the school premises where they drank and smoked. Such places included old and unfinished building blocks, behind laboratories and toilets. The respondents said that they sometimes came to class drunk and because of the numbers in the school; the teachers would not notice that they were drunk.

According to the findings of the study, the availability or accessibility of marijuana and alcohol had made teenage students to start abusing marijuana and alcohol at a very young age. The findings concur with Siphepho et al. (2013) who revealed that Swaziland is faced with a serious problem of large production of marijuana through cultivation. As a result the drug is easily accessed by many people who desire it, including the youth. The study revealed that some of the teenagers grew up knowing that marula alcohol is for cleaning their stomachs. It is a sacred and revered traditional beer whose coming is even celebrated by the monarch. Therefore, taking “*maganu*” is prestigious in Swaziland. Also, according to the findings of the study, marijuana farming was considered normal in communities where some of the teenagers resided. Also, teachers’ behaviour and attitudes towards students sometimes influenced drug and substance abuse among students.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, from this study, it can be concluded that teenage students are ‘naturally’ exposed to the drugs and substance abuse. That is, they are brought up in an environment where there is accessibility of drugs and substances at a tender age due to the fact that their families and almost the entire society are involved in drugs and substance abuse in one way or the other. The coming of the “*maganu*” season is celebrated by the state. This makes partaking in the “*maganu*” festival prestigious. In addition to that, the availability of drugs and substances makes them readily available at a low cost such that the school going teenagers can afford the drugs and substances from their pocket money. Some participants revealed that they are involved in transporting marijuana to the selling points. This gives them access to the drug and trivialises the offence of drug abuse, dealing and trafficking.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

The fact that teenagers are ‘naturally’ exposed to drug and substance abuse because of their social circumstances means that there is a need for a well-planned organised and professionally coordinated programme to deal with drug and substance abuse problems in families and in society.

The government needs to develop and implement a national policy on drugs and substance abuse together with relevant studies by institutions under different ministries to develop appropriate mitigatory measures at local levels such as in schools. Given the international flare of the drug and substance abuse it is also recommended that the government seeks financial and technical support from international organisations that specialise in drugs and substance abuse.

The fact that teenagers are naturally exposed to drug and substance abuse because of their social circumstances means that there is a need for a well-planned organised and professionally coordinated programme to deal with drug and substance abuse problems in families and in society. Such programme should be started at an early stage of child development such as the schools. Members of the society must be encouraged to participate in the suggested educational programmes so they can follow up their children at home,

Community leaders and law enforcement agents must be conscientised of the new techniques and methods used by adolescent drug and substance abusers. School infrastructure should have enough security to flush out all black spots that may be used to curtail drugs and substance abuse.

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